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INDIANA ROOM

STRAIGHT THROUGH THE WESTERN GATE

A Play

Dealing with Three Episodes in the Life of
George Rogers Clark



By Edith Lombard Squires
not acc.

This play may be produced by
arrangement with the author.
Royalty, \$10.00 for entire play;
\$5.00 for one episode.

EDITH LOMBARD SQUIRES
110 South Twenty-Second Street
Richmond, Indiana

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Price 25c Per Copy

PROLOGUE

TO GEORGE ROGERS CLARK

George Rogers Clark, turn back, turn back—
That coward cry rang in his ears ;
But did he falter—no, not he—
He won a glorious victory
And conquered for the waiting years.

George Rogers Clark, turn back, turn back—
He plunged unheeding through the mire,
And carried with his dauntless soul
Each struggling soldier to his goal,
Through bitter hunger, icy fire.

George Rogers Clark, turn back, turn back—
And now he heeds our ringing cheer ;
Tonight he hears our answering call,
We are his comrades, one and all—
George Rogers Clark is here !

STRAIGHT THROUGH THE WESTERN GATE

FIRST EPISODE

CLARK WINS KASKASKIA

STRAIGHT THROUGH THE WESTERN GATE

FIRST EPISODE

CLARK WINS KASKASKIA

July 4th, 1778

CHARACTERS

COLONEL GEORGE ROGERS CLARK

SIMON KENTON

JOHN SAUNDERS

BILLY

FATHER GIBAULT

MONSIEUR PERREAU

MADAME PERREAU

CHIEF LOGAN

PEOPLE OF KASKASKIA

SOLDIERS OF KASKASKIA

CAPTAIN OF FORT GAGE

CLARK'S SOLDIERS

INDIANS

FIDDLER

SCENE—*The great kitchen in Perreau's home. It is lighted by many candles. At the left a fireplace, at the back a door leading out-doors, at the right a window. The room is filled with people in holiday attire; young girls and soldiers, men and matrons. At the right sits the fiddler, while near the fire lie several Indians.*

PERREAU—*(a jolly red-faced man)* Come choose your partners for the final round,
These soldiers must return to guard the fort.

CAPTAIN—Aye, we must guard the fort, though not a foe
Would dare to brave these miles of wilderness.

PERREAU—*(clapping his hands)*
Come then, and choose your partners for the dance.
(They all line up for Sir Roger de Coverley (Virginia Reel) and dance down the centre of the room, singing as they go, and keeping time by clapping their hands to the fiddler's music.)

SONG—

If you catch a maiden's eye,
Heyho, Sir Roger.
She may blush and she may sigh,
Heyho, Sir Roger.
Hold her hand and press it well,
She will smile but never tell—
Heyho, Sir Roger.

If you wish a maiden's heart,
Heyho, Sir Roger.
Woo and win with Cupid's art,
Heyho, Sir Roger.
Hold her waist and kiss her well,
She will smile but never tell—
Heyho, Sir Roger.

(As they dance, the door at the back of the room opens, and Clark stands in the doorway; behind him are his men. They are bearded, dirty, incredibly ragged, some of the men stripped to the waist from briars and bushes. One of the Indians, lying on the floor and watching the dancing, yells—)

INDIAN—The Big Knives!
(The dancers stop, petrified, Clark raises his musket.)

CLARK—*(sternly)* The Fort is ours and you our prisoners.
Monsieur Perreau and all these gentlemen
Must march within the guard-house. Right about.

PERREAU—(*stepping forward*) Nay sir, if this be true, we will not fight,
But throw ourselves upon your mercy now.

CLARK—Be silent, sir. (*turning to his men*) Go march these prisoners down
Straight to the guard-house; let them be confined.
To wait the sentence we will execute.

(*A wail goes up from the women. Madame Perreau, a fine, stately woman, comes forward.*)

MADAME PERREAU—We pray you, sir, deal not so harshly now;
We will conform to all of your demands.

CLARK—(*bowing low*) Your pardon, madame, but my duty lies
Along the way that these must march tonight.
Pray tell these other ladies to go forth
As swiftly as they may. Stay in your homes
And leave the highways clear for soldiers' feet.

(*The women wail and embrace their husbands and sweethearts tenderly. The men face about sullenly and Clark's soldiers point them out with lowered muskets. The women follow them.*)

MADAME PERREAU—(*turning as she goes out*)
I go with these my friends and leave my house
Abandoned, desolate, no more my home,
But just a lodging where strange foes abide. (*She goes out.*)

CLARK—(*to Kenton and Saunders who remain*)
A good foe won will make a better friend;
She is a braver soldier than her man.
Now I must rest—the dawn is painting red
The edges of the sky—I'll rest and sleep.
Si, you and John will keep guard, turn about.

(*They go out. Clark rolls himself in his cloak and lies down by the fire. He turns uneasily, as if too weary to sleep, and then lies quiet. There is a pause.*)

SIMON—(*from the doorway*) 'Tis Father Gibault, sir, would speak with you.

CLARK—Tell him to come, though I may fall asleep
Before he says a word—but he may come.

(*Father Gibault enters. He goes swiftly to Clark and kneels beside him.*)

GIBAULT—O sir, these are my people—this my home.
My flock is dearer to my heart than life,
So now I lay my life here at your feet;
Do as you will with me, but spare them now—
My loyal people that have done no wrong.
It may not be—but cruel tales have come

Of torture from the Big Knives—'tis not so—
Now that I see you I will not believe
That one who seems so fine could be so foul.
If you will spare my people, I will give
You true and loyal service all my days.

(Father Gibault kneels before Clark in supplication.)

CLARK—You are a brave man and I love brave men;
And you are loyal, or I am no judge.
Go, Father Gibault, tell your people this:
The Big Knives are your friends, if you are theirs,
The Big Knives are the friends of your fair France,
Your countrymen are fighting for our cause.
Go tell them they may gather in your church,
And give to God and you their loyal praise;
Then all return to every home, unharmed—
Clark and the Big Knives will keep faith with them.

GIBAULT—*(brokenly)* Now may our Holy Lady and the Saints
Bring blessings, like spring rain, upon your heart!
What Father Gibault promises, he does—
I am your friend, and all my people too. *(He goes out.)*

CLARK—*(to Kenton)* Go tell the soldiers that the town is won,
The people are our friends—unloose the men
That lie within the guard-house—tell them this—
To Father Gibault do you owe this change,
Go swiftly then to Father Gibault's church,
Give God and Father Gibault loyal praise.

KENTON—And who will guard this door the while you sleep?
For sleep you must, brave leader, that I know.

CLARK—*(smiling)* Go then, Si Kenton, let John guard the door—
But truly, there's no need—the town is won.

(As he speaks, a bell is heard ringing joyously. Madame Perreau rushes past John into the room and throws herself at Clark's feet. He rises but she remains kneeling at his feet.)

MADAME PERREAU—O sir, but now the Father passed me by,
And told me of your goodness. God be praised.
My heart is lighter than a happy child's.
I pray you make this house of mine your home;
I go to join my husband at the church,
But first I must say this—we are your friends—
You have our loyal word—we speak the truth.
O God be praised, my man is free today!

(She kisses Clark's hand, then rises to her feet and goes out, weeping and smiling for joy.)

KENTON—*(to John, as they go out)*

There never was a leader like our Clark,
Nor one that stirred such faith in everyone.

(To some one outside the door)

Hola, what lad is this?

BILLY—*(without the door)* I would see Clark.

KENTON—You would see Clark—you would see *Colonel* Clark.

BILLY—Yes, I mean Colonel Clark. Pray let me in.

KENTON—And what can such a trifling slip as you
Find now to tell the Colonel—tell me that?

BILLY—*(earnestly)* He needs a drummer boy—I know it well.
And I can drum the best of anyone.

(Kenton laughs mightily.)

Nay sir, 'tis true, quite honestly, 'tis true.

CLARK—*(laughing)* O Simon, let him in. I fain would hear
The wonders that this drummer-boy can do.

(Billy comes in eagerly. He pulls forward his drum which has hung behind his back.)

BILLY—Most gracious sir, I give you many thanks.

(He beats a lively tattoo on his drum and the men come running in and salute.)

CLARK—What say you men, this stripling that you see
Would like to wield his drum along the march.
Think you his drum would lighten weary miles?

KENTON—I'll speak for them, pray let the lad abide
And be our drummer when we march to war.
I like the merry tapping of his beat.

THE MEN—Aye, aye, we like to hear him.

CLARK—Then 'tis done—

And Billy shall be drummer for the troop.

BILLY—O sir, I thank you with my inmost heart,
And I will give good service till I die.

CLARK—Talk not of dying—now you live to drum!
Go now and let me rest, the dawn is near.

(The soldiers march out, followed by Kenton and Billy. Clark lies down again wearily by the fire.)

The boy has something that bestirs my heart,
I am not wont to act so hastily.

(He lies quiet and the dawn shines rosily through the window. After a pause a hubbub sounds from without, and John backs in, vainly endeavoring to hold a massive Indian.)

CLARK—*(starting up)* Chief Logan! *(to John sharply)*
Let him be, he's not himself.

(Logan reels drunkenly, and throws himself down by the fire. At last he looks up at Clark.)

LOGAN—Who is there mourns for Logan—great Chief Logan?
There is not one to mourn—all, all are gone.

(Clark nods his head compassionately)

Once Logan was all white man's friend—ah yes.
And once when Logan came back to his camp,
He finds his hearth-fire cold, his children dead.
All, all are gone—and Logan's children dead.
A wicked white man had cut down them all,
Had spilt their blood, their red blood on the sand.
Chief Logan took his bloody belt and marched,
Nor rested till the white chief's scalp hung there.
Chief Logan hated white chiefs till Clark came,
If Clark his friend, Chief Logan not alone.

(He sinks down by the fire, his head on his breast.)

CLARK—Yes, Clark remembers, and he is your friend.
Tomorrow you will help Clark—will you not?
Tomorrow you will guide his good scouts' steps
To far Vincennes, and win the Indians there—
To far Vincennes—how that name thrills my heart—
Si Kenton is your friend; you saved him once
From fire and torture—he will go with you.

LOGAN—*(drowsily)* Tomorrow, Big Knives Chief, my way is yours.

(He sinks down by the fire in a drunken sleep.)

CLARK—*(to John)* See that no one disturbs him; let him rest—
He seeks forgetfulness from bitter pain,
All those he loved are gone—and he must live—
He is a good man and he is my friend.

(There is a sound of many voices. Father Gibault stands in the doorway; behind him the Kaskaskians.)

GIBAULT—These people of my heart wish me to say
All that their grateful souls cannot express.
They bring you loyal hearts to take the oath
Of their allegiance to America.

(Shouts without of "America, America.")

CLARK—You brought them, Father, I will not forget. *(He raises his right hand)*

Now will you take the oath to this new land?

(Father Gibault bows his head)

So help me God, you will be true this day
And ever after to America?

KASKASKIANS—So help us God we will be true this day
And ever after to America.

CLARK—There is no turning back, we will go on—
For our America all shall be won.

Curtain.

STRAIGHT THROUGH THE WESTERN GATE

SECOND EPISODE

CLARK AT CAHOKIA

STRAIGHT THROUGH THE WESTERN GATE

SECOND EPISODE

CLARK AT CAHOKIA

Autumn, 1778

CHARACTERS

COLONEL GEORGE ROGERS CLARK

MAJOR BOWMAN

SIMON KENTON

BIG GATE

FIRST PUAN BRAVE

SECOND PUAN BRAVE

INDIAN CHIEFS

FRANCIS VIGO

SCENE—*Early morning in Clark's cabin at Cahokia. A small fire is burning on the hearth at the left. The flames light the room dimly. Two plain, straight-backed chairs are on either side of the fireplace. At the right is a window, at the back a door. Clark and Bowman, wrapped in their cloaks, lie before the fire asleep.*

CLARK—*(sitting up and touching Bowman)*

There is a thread of sound I do not like.

BOWMAN—*(drowsily)* I do not hear it.

CLARK—Hark, it stirs again.

(Clark rises and motions to Bowman, who follows him sleepily. They creep softly to the door, open it swiftly—an Indian brave tries to escape; Clark strikes him and he falls silently.)

CLARK—I'll guard him, do you go and see without

If other Indian braves lurk somewhere near. *(Bowman goes out)*

CLARK—*(to Indian)* Is this the way your boasted friendship goes?

INDIAN—*(Sullenly)* No friend, no friend. Black Chief a Puan brave
Would get the Big Chief's scalp.

CLARK—Now I have yours

(Bowman re-enters, marching an Indian before him)

BOWMAN—I found him skulking off.

CLARK—*(contemptuously)* Two Puan braves.

Say rather, two poor squaws who hunt for meat.

If this be Puan bravery, I smile.

Go, Bowman, take them hence and keep them safe;

These two shall sit before our council-fire

Clothed like two squaws, for they are squaws, in sooth.

No Puan brave would stab a sleeping foe.

(Bowman marches them out at the point of his musket. Clark mends the fire, then folds his cloak around him and lies down. A pause. There is a knocking at the door.)

CLARK—*(yawning)* Ah—no more sleep—come in, I say, come in.

(Kenton enters.)

(Clark goes up to him and puts his hands on his shoulders.)

CLARK—What, back so soon from far away Vincennes

KENTON—*(nodding)* Aye, with good news—Vincennes is surely ours.

The Fort was scarcely manned, the town flocked out

To welcome Father Gibault—they love him—

And Helm will hold the fortress in your name,

Until you come to hold it in your own.

CLARK—Not for myself—for my America.

I scarce believe it yet, it seems too clear—

For always when I've dreamt Vincennes was won,

It was a frightful nightmare of bleak ways
And barren wastes, with black death lurking near.
But you speak truth, and so it must be true.

KENTON—Aye, true it is—but I forget my words—
The great chiefs bade me tell you they would come
Here to your council, when the dawn struck red
Across the marshy wastes. So they are near.

(Bowman enters)

BOWMAN—The Chiefs have come.

CLARK—Go bid them enter now.

(Bowman goes to the door and ushers in the Indian chiefs with great ceremony. The two Puan braves, dressed as squaws, bring up the rear. The chiefs seat themselves around the fire. Clark goes to the mantel-shelf and takes from it a bloody belt and a white belt, weighted with wampum.)

CLARK—O men and warrior braves, give ear to me.

I am a brave like you—like you a man.

I carry bloody war in my right hand *(holding up the red belt)*

I carry in my left hand righteous peace *(holding up the white belt)*

I am sent by the Big Knives, as their Chief

To hold this Council with the Indian Chiefs;

And I am sent to stain the crooked paths

Of those who would unbend the river's course,

And I am sent to clear the way for those

Who wish to march in friendship at our side.

I know a mist is yet before your eyes,

So let us speak together with one heart.

I will dispel the clouds that you may see,

May clearly see the cause of this great war

Between the Big Knives and their English foes—

And ye shall judge which party has the right.

The Big Knives, like the Red Men, love deep peace,

But they will wear the bloody belt of war,

For those that have no justice in their hearts.

The Englishmen have harried our good lands,

Have burned our homes, have killed our little ones—

We will not bear injustice, and our knives

Are swift to answer and see justice done.

We are your friends, and we would be at peace;

But we will fight, if needs be, to the death.

Here are two belts—this one is loaded down

With wampum that betokens our good will;

This other belt is bloody with red war—

So choose your belt, and hold us friend or foe.

(Clark holds up the two belts. There is a pause, then one of the Chiefs rises slowly and takes the white belt. He passes it on gravely and it goes from

hand to hand. He then places Clark's hand on his forehead and on his breast, in token of good faith. The braves sing in monotone.)

Great Chief Big Knives, we keep faith,
Great Chief Big Knives, we keep trust,
Great Chief Big Knives, we are friends,
We will smoke the pipe of peace,
Ula, Ula, pipe of peace,
Pipe of peace, pipe of peace.

BIG GATE—(rising majestically)

Big Gate is Big Knives' friend, Big Gate will smoke
The pipe of peace for many, many moons,
Till Big Gate and the Big Knives have passed on
To follow trails on other hunting-grounds.
Big Gate takes off old ways, old Indian ways,
Will be the Big Knives' friend all through and through.

(He proceeds to strip off his blanket, his long feathered head-dress, even his moccasins—leaving only his loin-cloth. He smiles broadly.)

Now Big Gate Big Knives' friend!

CLARK—You are his friend.

Chief of the Big Knives gives you his good will
And will give more, if Big Gate will accept.
Go, Major Bowman, bring a uniform.
That shall do justice to this mighty chief.

(Bowman goes out. Big Gate sits down with the other chiefs. Clark turns to the Puan braves, who have been watching silently.)

CLARK—And now what of these squaws

FIRST BRAVE—Not squaws, not squaws—

We die if Big Knives wish—so let it be.

(They prostrate themselves before Clark, and await his sentence.)

CLARK—Then are ye squaws no longer, but brave men

And fit to join our Council. Will ye join
And smoke with us the loyal pipe of peace?

SECOND INDIAN—(Simply) Big White Chief has great heart, so we will smoke.

Forget bad words—good fighter makes good friend.

(They seat themselves in the circle. Bowman comes in with a gay uniform—shining buttons and gold lace. He hands it with a bow to Big Gate, who begins to dress himself delightedly. He puts the coat on backwards, gives up the trousers in despair, and drapes the cloak around him like a blanket.)

CLARK—Now I will make Chief Big Gate, Captain here,

And he will be our Captain of Great Chiefs.
When darkness comes, build high the council-fire,
And we will smoke the peace pipe till red dawn.

(The Indians rise, and each Indian as he passes Clark, lays his hand on Clark's forehead and on his breast. They go out silently. Clark seats himself beside the fire.)

CLARK—*(to Bowman)* These Indians are like kindly children now.

BOWMAN—There's no one like you, sir, and that's the truth;
No one but you could so have won their hearts.

CLARK—Hush, Bowman. I hear footsteps. Guard the door.

(There is a knock at the door, Bowman opens it cautiously and Vigo enters—tired and travel-stained.)

VIGO—I could not rest, till I had told my news,
For as your friend 'tis very near my heart.
My friend, Vincennes is captured by the foe.

CLARK—*(starting up)* Vincennes is captured!

VIGO—Yes, 'tis bitter truth.

Your Captain Helm is prisoner in the Fort,
And I was held there till the General found
I was no further use. He let me go
Back to my merchant ways, but bade me say
Nothing of all I'd seen, till I reached home.
A roving man finds haven anywhere,
This is my home for you are here, my friend.

CLARK—Vincennes is captured; Helm a prisoner there!

VIGO—And when spring comes, then Hamilton will move
To win Kaskaskia, Cahokia, too.

CLARK—Yes, this I know, and so we cannot wait,
We must go now to conquer lost Vincennes,
For Hamilton would not expect us now.

VIGO—The whole land runs with ice and melting snow,
Well-nigh impassable to man and beast.

CLARK—But not for my brave troops, they will get through.

And such a sorry handful as they are—
I would be bound a slave for seven years
To have five hundred troops before me now—
And yet I mind me what my father said,
"We do not fight our battles by ourselves,
There is a mighty God who fights for us."
Not by the strong alone the fight is won
But by the vigilant, the active, brave.
I'll win Vincennes, though I must wade through hell.
Before the world has turned another day,
Straight through the western gate I'll win my way.

Curtain.

STRAIGHT THROUGH THE WESTERN GATE

THIRD EPISODE

CLARK CONQUERS VINCENNES

STRAIGHT THROUGH THE WESTERN GATE

THIRD EPISODE

CLARK CONQUERS VINCENNES

February 25, 1779

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

COLONEL GEORGE ROGERS CLARK

MAJOR BOWMAN

SIMON KENTON

JOHN SAUNDERS

BILLY, THE DRUMMER BOY

FIRST SOLDIER

SECOND SOLDIER

CAPTAIN HELM

GENERAL HENRY HAMILTON

MAJOR HAY

PRISONER

SOLDIER

SOLDIERS OF BOTH FORCES

TWO SQUAWS

INDIAN BRAVE

TOWNSPEOPLE

*SCENE—*A barren hill surrounded by sparse bushes a few miles from Vincennes. (This scene may be played before a drop curtain, which conceals the second scene.) Two squaws lift part of the carcass of a deer, grumbling and sighing, as they raise it to their shoulders. They do not notice that the bushes are parted silently at the left, and two of Clark's men creep softly towards them. With a yell the men jump forwards, the squaws drop the deer and rush wildly out at right.*

SIMON KENTON—*(looking at the deer)* This will mean victory to our spent force.

JOHN—Fire and food and rest for everyone,
Then on tomorrow to a shining end.

SIMON—Go back, and cheer the men. I'll build the fire
And have it burning when you come again.

(John goes out at left and Simon rubs flint and steel together and soon has a sparkling fire. From far without sound shouts, cheers coming nearer, and in rush ragged men, wet, clothed in mire, stumbling and falling from weakness but shouting feebly)
Hurrah, hurrah—

(They fall exhausted and fling their guns beside them.)

FIRST SOLDIER—Here's fire and yonder's food—and not a dream—
Now pinch me, comrade, or it is a dream.

SECOND SOLDIER—*(pinching him gravely)*
Is that a pinch? My fingers are so numb
I scarce can bend them.

FIRST SOLDIER—*(rubbing his leg)* Aye, you pinched me well.
Now truly do I know 'tis not a dream—
Good fortune's with us, and the luck has turned.
We'll win Vincennes—I feel it in my bones.

SECOND SOLDIER—And never was a leader like our Clark;
He's always helping those that fall behind,
And cheering every heart—there's none like him.

(Clark enters. The men cheer and strive to rise but fall back exhausted.)

CLARK—Lie still and rest, the fight is almost won;
Vincennes lies yonder—we are nearly there. *(Turning to Simon.)*
You found a deer—what wonderment is this!

SIMON—Some squaws were making off and we rushed in—
They left this where you see it.

CLARK—*(calling)* Hey there, John.
(John enters from the back with a kettle on his head, like a huge cap.)

* Refer to Notes.

Take off your headgear and fetch water now—
The whole land runs with water, as we know—
And we will make a thick, warm-flowing soup
To cheer the frozen gullets of my men.

(As Clark speaks, some of the stronger men have begun to walk the weaker ones up and down, in order to warm them. Some of the men can scarcely stand and their legs double under them as, a soldier on each side, they are marched back and forth.)

FIRST SOLDIER—*(watching them)*

'Twill warm their frozen feet—how mine do ache!

SECOND SOLDIER—We're luckier than the rest—we feel the ache—
But if the feeling's gone—I say, look out!

(Simon drags the deer into the bushes. In a moment he re-appears with some meat. John enters from the left with the pot of water; they set it over the fire and put the meat in to cook. Major Bowman enters. One arm supports a limp figure—a lad, not through his teens—beardless and young. Around his neck hangs his drum.)

CLARK—Now lay the lad down by the fire—he's done.

BOWMAN—Here by the fire I'll lay him and the warmth
Will put new life into his poor, chilled bones.

(The lad stirs feebly and strives to beat his drum.)

BILLY—The water rises fast and it is cold.

CLARK—*(chafing his hands)*

Nay, nay, the water's past—you'll soon be warm
And dry as any tinder on the shelf.

BILLY—I am so cold—I cannot beat my drum.

SIMON—*(going to him and chafing his hands and legs gently)*

Nay then, nay then, lie still and do not prate.
Remember how your drum-sticks played a tune—
A merry, tapping beat for us who marched—
And through the deepest ways I held you high
That you and Brother Drum might come unharmed.

JOHN—He is so small, the shallow waters reached
Up to his arm-pits and bemired him well—
Now he must lie close to the fire and rest.

CLARK—*(to Bowman)* They all need rest, God knows—food, fire, and
rest;

This little respite will mean victory.
Such piercing, icy chill and sodden clothes—
Such days of tramping through the freezing flood!

BOWMAN—And yet you never faltered nor looked back,
But always cried, "Look forward, men"—they looked—
And followed blindly through the raging flood.

CLARK—I never doubted that this day would come.
Each night the cold sun set, I saw bright hope,
A beacon fire blazing in the dark.
Kaskaskia, Cahokia, Vincennes—
Like jewels in a necklace are they set
And for this new America are won.
Straight through the western gate, beyond Vincennes,
We win the west for our America.

(One of the soldiers enters with a prisoner. The man's face is ashen with fear, he gasps—
The Big Knives.

CLARK—Yes, we are called that in truth.
Our sharpened blades will see swift justice done;
So think of this and tell me all the truth.
Now tell me is Fort Sackville guarded well?
Has Hamilton his Indians at command?

PRISONER—Yes, yes, the Fort is strong and guarded well,
With full two hundred Indian braves close by.
Tobacco's Son is Chief—you know him, sir?

CLARK—I know him, yes. Now I will let you go,
Upon condition that you take this word—
First, to the people of Vincennes, I say,
Stay close within your homes, leave clear the streets;
If you are foes, march out and we will fight.
And to the Curé say, "You are my friend,
And I will pledge my Big Knives as your friends."
Then to Tobacco's Son say, "I have smoked
The pipe of peace with many of your tribe,
But I will wear the bloody belt of war,
If you forget the paths your fathers trod."
Go, take these messages, forget them not—
I have a long reach and my knife is sharp.

PRISONER—I hasten to Vincennes to speak your words
As well and truly as I heard them here.

CLARK—Go then in peace, in peace we meet again.

(The man goes out and Clark stands lost in thought, then turns to Bowman)

CLARK—Think you they marked, there in Vincennes today,
How we marched round and round this mighty hill,

Nought but our pennons showing, held so high
That they might think a force five hundred strong
Lay safe encamped and ready to assault.

BOWMAN—I know they marked us—twas a clever trick,
Well planned, well done—'twill bring our victory near.

(A cry from Billy makes Clark turn.)

BILLY—*(starting up)* The water rises fast—I hear a drum.

CLARK—Nay, nay, lie down and rest your fevered head.
You've made us smile a score of weary days
With your bright spirits and your prankish tricks—
Lie down and rest, nor turn our smiles to tears.
We cannot lose you now—lie down and sleep.

BILLY—*(opening his eyes and speaking less wildly)*
Vincennes is near?

CLARK—*(smiling at him)* Yes Billy, very near.
This very day we'll find the town is ours.

BILLY—*(proudly but feebly)* You are a mighty General—They will say
His drummer-boy was Billy—will they not?

CLARK—And they will say—if Billy had not drummed
So loudly and so clearly, we had felt
The icy waters and the cruel pang
Of biting hunger through these long, lean days.

(Turning to his men) Three cheers for Billy!

SOLDIERS—Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!

CLARK—*(to Simon)* Give him a cup of soup.

(Simon dips out a cup from the kettle and turns to Billy, who lies still smiling, but quiet.)

SIMON—Here is some soup—some soup to make you strong.

(Then as Billy does not stir, he turns to Clark, his face working.)

O Colonel—he is gone—

(The soldiers sink down dejected. Clark calls quickly.)

CLARK—O Simon, John, quick—feed these weary men.

(He motions to Bowman and they carry Billy's slight body out at left.)

(Simon and John feed the soldiers from the soup kettle.)

FIRST SOLDIER—*(after a pause, brushing his hand across his eyes.)*

The luck ain't turned at all—the luck is done—
And nothing matters now that Billy's gone.

SECOND SOLDIER—We can't go on without him. I can't march
Unless I hear his drum to mark the steps—
And now his steps are marked by different drums—
We'll hear death marking time—so mark my words!

(Clark and Bowman re-enter.)

CLARK—*(aside to Bowman)* Now we must find new strength for weary
souls—

My men are at low ebb—their hearts forlorn.

(He advances and speaks in ringing tones.)

My brave men, listen—for my heart, like yours,
Mourns for the passing of our comrade's soul.
But he is with us yet—you know it well—
His spirit marches bravely by our side—
On to Vincennes—he conquers with us still.

(He stoops and taking some powder from a soldier's powder-horn, smears the dark powder on his cheeks. At a glance from him, Bowman follows suit. With a wild shout, Clark grasps his gun and calls—

On to Vincennes, on to Vincennes, my men—
On to Vincennes—we capture it tonight!

(The men jump up, reach for their guns and shout.)

SOLDIERS—On to Vincennes—we capture it tonight!

Curtain.

SCENE II—Early morning of February 25th, 1779.

The Square in Vincennes in front of the Fort. At the left of the stage some trees; at the right, Father Gibault's church. Across the back of the stage, the stockade of the Fort. The nose of a cannon projects through the stockade at the left. Lighted lanterns are hung on the gate-posts and the gates of the stockade stand open, disclosing at the back a beam of candle-light, which comes from the open doorway of Hamilton's cabin within the Fort, and helps to light the half-darkened stage. Major Hay steps out of the open doorway and stands in the gateway of the stockade.

HAY—There were some shots and fired this way, I thought.

(Hamilton joins him.)

HAMILTON—Come in and close the door, the dawn is chill.

The cards are tempting but *(yawning heavily)* I must to bed.

There may have been some shots—it matters not—

Some Indian braves returning from the hunt,

Have fired a round to tell high heaven their skill—

A childish trick and wasteful of good shot.

(Helm's voice from the background.)

HELM—Nay, General. It may be Colonel Clark,
Come through this wintry chill to conquer you.

(Hamilton shrugs his shoulders and laughs.)

HAMILTON—Your Colonel Clark may be a headstrong fool,
But even fools respect a raging flood.
The icy waters stretch for miles and miles,
Breast-high, impassable to all but gods.

(At the right of the stage, dim figures creep out and fire at the Fort. Helm comes to the door with the pieces of a broken jug in his hands.)

HELM—That shot was near—the toddy jug is gone.

HAMILTON—This is too much—these Indians shall be whipped.

SOLDIER—*(rushing in from left.)*

Vincennes is captured—now they storm the Fort!

HELM—*(shouting)* The Big Knives! Clark is here! The gods have come!

HAMILTON—*(to Helm)* Stay where you are, on peril of your life.
(to Hay) Go, rouse the men.

HAY—*(rushes out at back, shouting)* To arms, my men, to arms.

(The soldier hands Hamilton a paper. Hamilton reads it and draws himself up angrily.)

HAMILTON—What insolence is this—the fellow dares
To ask for our surrender. Tell me this—
How many men has Clark?

SOLDIER—I am not sure—

The towns folk say five hundred—maybe more.

(The soldiers come running from the back, bewildered by Hay's sudden call.)

HAMILTON—Go, man the guns, Clark and his men are here.

(The great doors of the Fort are shut and barred.)

(The daylight grows stronger and discloses Clark and all his men firing at the Fort. Through the opening where the cannon projects, the faces of Hamilton's gunners can be plainly seen; Clark's men fire at them, and the men fall before they can load the cannon. Cries and groans are heard from the wounded.)

CLARK—*(shouting)* Today, brave men, the victory is ours—
The town, the Fort, Vincennes—all ours today!

(An Indian enters from the left and holds up his hand for a parley.)

INDIAN—A message from Tobacco's mighty son.

CLARK—*(going to him)* Clark listens. Speak your message and be brief.

INDIAN—Tobacco's mighty son will gladly come
And give the Big Knives' Chief his friendly aid.

CLARK—The Big Knives thank Tobacco's mighty son,
And pray him hold his braves in readiness,
To join us when another day has dawned.

(The Indian goes out.)

CLARK—*(to Bowman)* I trust him not. He says he is our friend—
We will not let him prove himself a foe.
We win the Fort today or are dead men.

(A signal flag is raised over the stockade.)

CLARK—Hurrah, my men, a signal flag is raised,
So we will stop to parley with our foes.

CLARK—*(to soldier)* Go tell the General I will parley here
By Father Gibault's Church—he is my friend.

(The soldier stands in front of the Fort and raises a signal flag.)

(to Bowman) And while we parley, bid my soldiers rest,
And tell the townsfolk that bespoke us well,
To give them breakfast while the parley lasts. *(Exit Bowman.)*

(Some of the soldiers walk over to right of stage to look at the cannon. The gate of the Fort swings open; Clark's soldier approaches Hamilton.)

SOLDIER—Our Colonel says that he will parley now
By Father Gibault's Church, beyond the Fort.

HAMILTON—So, he will parley! *(to Hay)* Then tell Helm to come—
The three of us will meet this Colonel Clark.

(The townsfolk enter from the left with baskets of food; they go to the soldiers who eat like ravenous wolves.)

FIRST SOLDIER—Now this is heaven, and these are angels here.

SECOND SOLDIER—*(stuffing his mouth full)* I would I had five stomachs
and two mouths

FIRST SOLDIER—No talking now, we eat—hurrah, we eat!

(Hamilton, Hay and Helm march outside the stockade. Clark and Bowman are waiting for them. Hamilton bows stiffly.)

CLARK—Here comes the great Hair-buyer—bless the day!

HAMILTON—Sir, you insult me—

CLARK—I have heard it said,
That those who put the glove on found 'twas theirs!

HAMILTON—(*haughtily*) Enough of idle words. So we are met—
And we must parley. Tell us of your terms.

CLARK—The Fort, and your surrender—that is all.
My prisoners at discretion—that is all.

HAMILTON—How dare you, sir, dictate such terms to me!
Unjust, unreasoned—it is shameful, sir!

HELM—(*to Clark*) Nay, I can vouch for Hamilton's good word,
And well assure you he's worth better terms.

CLARK—Since when do prisoners speak and give such praise
To hardy captors? Prisoners hold their peace.

HAMILTON—Now do I set him free—so let him speak.

CLARK—No, he must serve his time and bide his fate.
These are my terms—surrender now or fight.
The drums will sound and my attack begin.

(*Clark turns away.*)

HAMILTON—Nay, wait a moment, sir, and tell me true
Your reasons for these harsh and bitter terms.

CLARK—Here are my reasons then, for these harsh terms.
Foul men you have whose hands are stained with blood
Of pioneers who fought to guard their homes—
Their new-plowed fields, their precious half-cleared lands—
They fought, were killed and scalped, and left to rot,
By Indian partisans now in your fort.
I'd rather lose full fifty of my men
And massacre your garrison for these.
In far away Kentucky, sorrowing wives
Would march here gladly to see justice done.

HAY—(*haughtily*) Pray sir, who are these Indian partisans?

CLARK—(*dryly*) Sir, I take Major Hay to be the chief.

(*Hay shrinks back.*)

HAMILTON—The parley's over—we defend the fort.

(*They turn to re-enter the stockade and the soldiers start to close the gates.*)

CLARK—Men, sound the drums—prepare to storm the Fort.

(*The men jump up, the townsfolk scurry out.*)

(*A soldier rushes to Hay.*)

SOLDIER—A message for the General—fearful news.

(*Hay leads him to Hamilton.*)

HAY—Here is a messenger—

SOLDIER—(*panting*) Your Indian braves—
Returned now from a foray with their belts
Close set with scalps of women—children too—
Were captured by Clark's men and all were killed.

HAMILTON—We cannot fight these madmen—we must yield.
Go, tell this Clark we yield to all his terms.
This is a bitter day for England's power,
And bitter as dark wormwood to my soul.

(*The soldier approaches Clark.*)

SOLDIER—The General yields to all of your demands.

CLARK—(*to his men*) The Fort is ours—Vincennes is ours at last!

SOLDIERS—Vincennes, Vincennes, Vincennes is ours at last!

(*Clark and his men gather at right of gate; Hamilton, Hay, Helm and the soldiers march out and line up at left of gate.*)

HAMILTON—I yield my sword in mercy to my men.
We are your prisoners—I say no more.

(*Clark receives Hamilton's sword, Hamilton stands with bent head.*)

CLARK—This is the proudest moment of my life,
For all my life this dream has stirred my sleep.

(*Turning to his men*) Brave men, and comrades of a bitter night,

Today Vincennes is ours—yes, yours and mine—
But we have won far more than this fair Fort—
Here lies the gateway to the wilderness,
Beyond and still beyond, our cause shall march
Till only ocean shall hold back our steps.
My comrades, we have won—salute the foe—
Straight through the western gateway we will go.

Curtain.

(*The curtain may rise again and the entire cast may sing Song of the Sons of Freedom.*)

SONG OF THE SONS OF FREEDOM

Across our country of the free
From north to south, from sea to sea,
Blazes the trail our fathers trod
From home and hearth-fire up to God.

And we are traveling through the years
With heavy burdens, cares and fears,
In covered wagons of the soul—
Shall we forget our nation's goal?

Shall we not be more nobly free,
A beacon for new liberty—
Forever tread the path they trod,
From home and hearth-fire up to God.

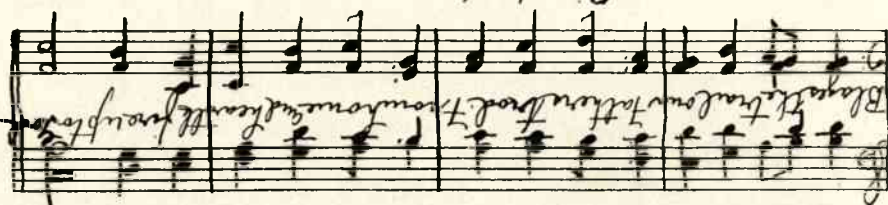
NOTES

In the last episode of the play, Scene I, piles of brush may be placed at either side of the drop curtain. The brush at right may conceal an electric light bulb, under red paper; this may be turned on as Simon uses his flint and steel.

As far as possible, history has been carefully followed in this play, although it has been necessary sometimes, to condense the action into a shorter period of time than would have been possible in real life. Clark received the news of the fall of Vincennes beyond Cahokia. The episode of the drummer-boy is entirely imaginary; as are also the characters of Monsieur and Madame Perreau, and the scene with Logan.



San Rafael de Covadonga



*Blaise, I thank you Father, brother, friend,
I thank you all, my friends, my friends,*



Handwritten musical notation for the second staff of the song. The melody continues with a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, ending with a double bar line. The lyrics "The Southbound Train" are written above the staff.

Wardlaw
Edith Lockhart Ogilvie

Chorus of Freedom

made by Ruth Poff